

The Semaphore

A PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS



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TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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Cover: Jack Keruocac Street intersects the the complex of buildings created by Italo Sanolini (1913) that today house The Vesuvio and City Lights Bookstore. Lesser known writers are also celebrated by street re-christenings. (See page 15)



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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A COMMUNITY PLAN

by Paul Scott

My grandpa always used to say, sometimes in life if you wanted a job done, you just had to do it yourself. That was particularly true, he would add, when the alternative was to have a huge multinational corporation screw up your neighborhood. And so it goes with Piers 27-31. Now that Supervisor Peskin's resolution to kill the Mill's project has been tabled, numerous local groups, including THD, have



banded together to develop an alternative community plan.

As most of you know, in early 2001, after an unseemly degree of intervention by the mayor, the Mills Corporation was awarded the right to exclusively negotiate with the Port for the development of Piers 27-31. Late this year, Supervisor Peskin introduced a resolution before the Board of Supervisors urging the Port not to extend the exclusive negotiating period with Mills and further urging it to reissue the original request for proposals, so the project could be awarded in a process free from undue influence. The resolution was backed by THD, the Sierra Club and a new organization called Citizens to Save the Waterfront, which includes most of the major merchants along the northeast waterfront. Shortly before the final vote by the Board of Supervisors on the resolution, though, representatives of Mills met with some of the key opponents of the project, including THD, and agreed to participate in a series of discussions through the end of January 2004 to determine whether a plan could be agreed upon that would satisfy the needs and concerns of both the project's opponents and Mills. As a result of that understanding, and the political reality faced by the project's opponents, the supervisor's resolution was tabled.

The first step in the negotiation process was a meeting on Dec. 16 to discuss the constraints that the public trust doctrine might place on any plan for the waterfront. In attendance were representatives from the Port (including new Port Commissioner Michela Alioto), the State Land's Commission, the owners of Levi's Plaza, Ron Kaufman (another major real estate holder on

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *continued*

the waterfront), Citizens to Save the Waterfront, the Sierra Club, the North East Waterfront Advisory Committee), the YMCA and THD.

With the information gleaned from that meeting and other sources, certain of the key project opponents are now focused on developing an alternative community plan. Rather than simply rearranging deck chairs, the idea is to take a fresh look at the entire plan and develop an alternative proposal that would better serve the community's needs. It is understood that any such plan would have to fall within the confines of the Port's original request for proposals, which called for a recreation-oriented project, and that it would still have to be economically viable for Mills and the city. The starting point, though, would not be "How to make a buck?" It would be "How can we create something truly magnificent and enduring for our community on the waterfront and still pay the bills?"

Numerous ideas are already being floated, ranging from wave pools and ice rinks to a revival of the Sutro Baths. A number of well respected local planners and architects have expressed interest in helping putting these and/or others ideas to paper. While any proposals would of course be subject to the daunting prospect of umpteen different organizations, including Mills, weigh-

ing in for or against, this process will have the have the undoubtedly beneficial effect of creating a clear visual alternative to the current plan, which is simply not worthy of our neighborhood, our city, or our waterfront.

701 Lombard

My grandpa also used to say, you know you're making progress when you're threatened with legal action by the opposition. And, once again, his words rang true at the December hearing before the Board of Supervisors on THD's appeal of the Planning Department's environmental OK of the proposed condo at 701 Lombard St. Before the end of the hearing, threats coming from the condo's backers ranged from a lawsuit against the city to grand jury indictment of our local supervisor. Not surprisingly, the vote was 6-4 in favor of THD's appeal. Planning Department staff must

now compile a more complete documentation of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. This includes its potential impact on the neighboring Joe DiMaggio playground, through shadowing, and on important public views and vistas of historical sites, such as Coit Tower, Russian Hill and Joe DiMaggio Playground. With this more complete information, the Planning Commission in the new

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *continued*

administration will be able to revisit whether the developers should indeed be granted a permit for this project. Keep your fingers crossed.

Emperor Norton

Over the past two years, some civic-minded folks have been urging the creation of a small plaza with a statue of Emperor Norton on the bulb of sidewalk located at the intersection of Kearny and Vallejo at the top of the Macchiarini steps (part of Kearny Street). Joshua Norton, as many know, is a uniquely San Franciscan historical character, who declared himself emperor of the United States in 1859. Decked out in a castoff blue military uniform with tarnished gold-plated epaulettes, he paraded the streets and saloons of the city, greeting his loyal subjects and making acquisitions for the crown with his own personally minted currency. The reaction, of course, was reflective of San Francisco's hallmark

character: universal tolerance and good cheer.

In 1933, local North Beach artist Peter Macchiarini created a small sculpture of Emperor Norton. Since Peter's death in 2001, his son and other friends of the family have endeavored to have a larger version of the sculpture placed at the

top of the steps. Numerous members of the immediate neighborhood, however, have expressed strong opposition to the placement of the statue at that location, citing concerns about traffic, impact on views and the size of the statue. One suggested alternative has been to include a reduced version of the statue lower down the hill as part of a larger project of rebuilding the Macchiarini steps between Broadway and Vallejo. Discussions are planned by THD to see if a solution agreeable to all concerned can be reached. My grandpa would say, "don't hold your breath," but I'm hoping he's wrong on this one.





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PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT

THD WATCHDOGS FOCUS ON PROPOSED HOTEL

By Nan Roth, Jeanne Milligan and Art Peterson

It takes an impressive mix of self-assurance and bravado to propose a major construction project that rubs up against not one but two designated historical districts. And self-assurance and bravado are two qualities for which the Stanford Hotel Corporation deserves high marks.

The corporation has plans to build a hotel on some blocks left vacant by the removal of the Embarcadero Freeway that are bounded by the Embarcadero, Broadway, Front and Vallejo streets. The proposed site is located entirely within the boundaries of the Northeast Waterfront Historic District, established in 1983, and across the street from the soon-to-be-designated National Register Historic District that will run along the bay side of the Embarcadero.

In addition, the new construction needs to comply with the requirements of the Waterfront Land Use Plan created by the Port of San Francisco in 1997, not to mention the San Francisco General Plan. It would seem that the bar for new construction on Seawall Lots 323 and 324, as these parcels have been designated, has

been set pretty high.

But a few years ago the hotel project seemed to be plowing full speed ahead. Hill Dwellers were first alerted to the Stanford project by Joe Luttrell's article in the Winter 1998 issue of the Semaphore ("Mega Hotel Looms at Embarcadero and Broadway"). Luttrell, who was a member of a public advisory group on the project before the group was disbanded by the Port, warned that the 300-plus room structure (some reports put the number of rooms as high as 450) was on a fast track. According to Luttrell, Port Director Douglas Wong and Mayor Willie Brown saw a large hotel on this site as a way of making money for the Port and the decision to go ahead was being made with no real public input.

But the community did manage to put the brakes on the project, and Stanford has since expressed a willingness to address community concerns. The corporation brought in a new architect and the number of proposed rooms has been scaled back to 260. Plans for a bridge across Davis Street have been abandoned and other changes in the original plan have been effected.

But in a letter sent in December to Stanford's project director by Nan Roth and Jeanne Milligan, representing respectively THD's Waterfront Committee and Planning and Zoning Committee, THD makes it clear that further alterations, major and minor, are needed.

The area of greatest concern is the height of the building. The Waterfront Land Use Plan requires height limits of 40 feet along the Embarcadero. The proposed building would be

continued on next page



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PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT *continued*

Proposed Hotel cont'd.

six stories and 65 feet high on the Embarcadero. Additionally, the building would have vertical extensions resulting in the structure rising to 81 feet.

The proposed height would dwarf both the Gateway Commons buildings across the street on Broadway and the bulkhead buildings across the Embarcadero. The building would be the tallest one between the Embarcadero and the base of Telegraph Hill to the west. One reason this matters is that the city's general plan demands that the view corridors of city landmarks and the skyline be protected. The new structure is likely to affect the views of Telegraph Hill and Coit Tower from the Embarcadero and also views of the Bay, the Bay Bridge and Treasure Island from Telegraph Hill.

THD urges that the Environmental Impact Report, which must be conducted prior to this construction, "contain accurate studies and photographic montages to show how the hotel will appear against the backdrop of Telegraph Hill from various vantage points along the Embarcadero as well as how it will appear from Telegraph Hill."

The hotel's mass is another reason for concern. The Waterfront Plan requires that the mass of structures be offset by setbacks at intervals of

at least a half block. The proposed hotel structure presents a solid, virtually unchanged front along the Embarcadero. The same overwhelming mass is a feature of the hotel's garage.

More generally, the Hill Dwellers want the developers to create a structure compatible with other buildings in the historic district. The district's description of these historical buildings makes clear their characteristics: they are for the most part warehouse like buildings of either brick, if constructed before 1906, or reinforced concrete, if built after that date. The texture of these structures tends to be rough. Windows are limited, vertical and recessed.

In contrast, the materials chosen for the hotel consist in part of honed and polished granite and combine a variety of materials on a single building, which seems "uncharacteristic of the more straightforward materials on the historic buildings." With regard to the windows, THD urges that the "window system be simplified with a higher proportion of mass to void."

The plan for the garage includes a bamboo structure to make it less garage-like and a Teflon roof canopy which has, as its admirable purpose, the hiding (from the vantage point of Telegraph Hill) of vehicles parked on the hotel roof. The

continued on next page



BROADWAY ELEVATION

This architect's rendering of the hotel shows its height exceeding that of the pier bulkheads on the other side of the Embarcadero.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT *continued*

problem is that the roof canopy is very much out of keeping with the numerous regularly spaced industrial sky lights which dominate the present view of the west side of the Embarcadero from the hill.

So it's clear there is still work to be done. The Hill Dwellers are asking the developers to "consider a reduced development alternative, and ... work with San Francisco Architectural Heritage

on design details ... that will bring the project into compatibility with its important historic setting on our Waterfront."

The developers revisions to the project were scheduled to be presented to the Architectural Review Committee of the Landmarks Board sometime in February. The Environmental Impact Report will be completed in March or early April, then reviewed by the Planning Department. ✕

UPDATE FROM THE FRIENDS OF GOLDEN GATEWAY

By Nan McGuire

The site of the current Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club is once again being proposed for residential development as "8 Washington Street."

This is the third attempt by the owners of the Golden Gateway complex to replace this outdoor recreational open space with a residential structure. THD has opposed efforts in the past and opposes this effort also. Our rationale for doing so is based on the fact that land for the Golden Gateway Commons, a condo development, was originally sold to the developer at below market rate. This was done because the site of the tennis and swim club, as well as Sidney Walton Park, were supposed to be out of reach to developers due to their use as a recreational facilities.

A negative declaration was issued on the project in November by the Environmental Services unit of the Planning Department, and the Friends of Golden Gateway (FOGG) has filed an appeal with the Planning Department, challenging their assertions that the traffic and shadow impacts will be negligible.

FOGG is a group of residents from the Golden Gateway, members of the tennis and swim club, and interested parties who are trying to save this 35-year-old, unique recreational open space in the

city. Although the club charges a membership fee and has monthly dues, anyone can take a tennis or swimming lesson without actually joining. Family members come from all neighborhoods because this is the only year-round, outdoor pool in the city where children can swim or take lessons. There is also a summer camp program open to both members and non-members.

The facility was originally established as one of the mitigation measures for the housing density represented by the four Golden Gateway towers, with special reduced fees available for residents. The late tennis great, Arthur Ashe, played on the courts and each summer a special tennis clinic is held there for inner-city children. The 8 Washington St. project for 120 very high-end condo units would eliminate three of the existing nine tennis courts. It would also eliminate the grassy area where families congregate in the summer with their children, put one of the outdoor pools inside, and be generally inhospitable to the family activities that have existed for so many years.

Friends of Golden Gateway encourage you to visit their web site www.fogg.us for more in depth information and dates and times for hearings. You may also contact THD member Nan McGuire at 673-7074.

New Home for THD Archives Inspires Historical Sleuthing

by Rozell Overmire

Our THD archives are 50 years old this year and are being gathered at a new central storage place, the Columbus Avenue office of THD historian Nancy Shanahan.

Since 1987, the archives have been housed at the Francisco Street home of Rhoda Robinson, who took on the responsibility of collecting and preserving them when she became THD historian after serving as membership chair. Rhoda developed the archive primarily by contacting former

THD presidents and soliciting their collections of material. In the process, other people with valuable documents came forward.

There is much in the archives that needs explanation and documentation. With this in mind, Howard Wong, who has made the photo boards we use in our THD booth at the annual Grant Avenue Fair, suggested holding a work party to help identify people in the THD photo archives. The party will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, March 6, at Nancy's office,

continued on next page

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THD ARCHIVES

continued from previous page

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Rhoda will be there to help us with the photos. If you have photos of THD events to donate,

please bring them. We will have membership lists from the past to help us jog our memories. So look in your photo archives; you'll be amazed what you might find (See below). And help us preserve our memories for the next generation.



Rhoda Robinson at the 2003 THD holiday celebration

Rhoda found this treasure in her personal archives. The photo is of an opening day exhibit at the American Air Museum in England, 1944. At the rear of the display is a portrait of Rhoda in her Red Cross uniform. Rhoda says that Queen Elizabeth is believed to have lingered over this display when she came for the opening.

— R.O.

Car-Sharing: A Road to Fewer Hassles, Cleaner Air

By Eliot Dobri, *CityCarShare*

“Driving Pleasure.” In North Beach-Telegraph Hill, where parrots are more plentiful than parking spots, that’s an oxymoron. However, more and more residents have been freeing themselves from the burden of car ownership without compromising their ability to make a Costco run or take a spin up the Mendocino Coast.

Their solution is City CarShare. If you’re a member of CarShare, or know someone who is, you understand that it is a local nonprofit organization that offers people in the Bay Area a cheaper, more convenient alternative to owning a car. For \$2-\$4 an hour and 44cents a mile, CarShare members have 24-hour access to 80 late-model cars at nearly 40 locations throughout the Bay Area.

Those cost includes gas, insurance, parking and maintenance. In North Beach, members can choose from one of three green Beetles or a VW Jetta station wagon located in the garage above the Central police station on Vallejo Street. Also available are dozens of other cars located around the city, East Bay and Peninsula.

The cars can be reserved at the last minute or in advance — either online or by phone — for times ranging from 15 minutes to 15 days. Members can immediately pick up the vehicles at their neighborhood location without paperwork or waiting in line.

The vision of City CarShare’s founders, however, goes beyond providing San Franciscans with a foolproof way to never again face a dead battery in the morning. Their goal is to create a more livable San Francisco with fewer cars, less congestion and pollution, more open space and safer streets for bikers and pedestrians.

A study conducted by UC Berkeley’s Institute of Urban and Regional Development indicates that dramatic progress is being made. The study documents that car-sharing substantially reduces the emission of greenhouse gases. Each day, researchers say, City CarShare saves 13,000 miles of vehicle travel, which translates into savings of 720 gallons of gasoline, and 20,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. And since those calculations were made, City CarShare’s membership has doubled to nearly 3,000 members.

The researchers tracked the effect of having access to shared cars by following hundreds of members of City CarShare over an 18-month period. In addition to emission reductions, they found that 30 percent of City CarShare households in San Francisco have sold one or more of their privately owned cars. Sixty-seven percent have chosen not to purchase an additional car. And overall automobile travel among City CarShare members has dropped 47 percent, while use of public transit, walking and bicycling by City CarShare members has increased.

The effect, says Robert Cervero, a professor of

HELP THE ‘HOOD *Shop Locally*

CARSHARE *continued from previous page*

city and regional planning with the Berkeley institute, has been to “enhance the mobility of individual members, allowing them to conveniently reach more destinations in and around the San Francisco Bay Area and to do so more quickly.”

City CarShare operates with fuel-efficient Volkswagens and Hondas, which translates into a significant reduction in fuel consumption among its members. In 2004, City CarShare’s reductions of greenhouse gases will accelerate as its adds more than 20 new, fuel-efficient Scion Xa and Xb compact wagons to its fleet.

“Not only is City CarShare an affordable alternative to car ownership, it is also incredibly easy to use,” said Annie Bourdon, City CarShare’s deputy director for outreach and expansion. “Members always have a guaranteed parking space at the end of their trip; and the cars are cleaned, repaired and maintained by City CarShare staff. Almost anyone is eligible to join at www.citycarshare.org. We encourage folks to start enjoying the freedom of driving without the

hassles — and cost — of car ownership.”

Eighty-five percent of City CarShare members use the service at least once per month; 30 percent use it once per week or more. The biggest use of City CarShare is for shopping (29.5 percent), followed by personal business (19.2 percent), recreation (12.5 percent), travel to work (10.7 percent), social (8.3 percent), medical (5.6 percent), dining out (4.7 percent) and other (9.5 percent).

The authors of the UC Berkeley study compared the cost of individual trips based on time and distance and found that 84 percent of trips taken during the period of research were cheaper using City CarShare than they would have been using taxis or traditional car rental.

Enlightening as these numbers are, they fail to capture is the pure bliss enjoyed by those City CarShare members who never have to repair or clean a car again. If you’re a car owner who is not yet convinced that City CarShare is for you, visit the CarShare website or call 415-995-8588. Becoming a member only takes five minutes. In a few days, you can be behind the wheel. ✦



Where Poets Matter

By Art Peterson

You can tell a lot about a neighborhood from its street names. Suffice to say, there is no Elm Street in North Beach. Instead we have a Jack Kerouac Street and a William Saroyan Place, and also a few streets named for writers who have not yet found their way into the English 1A canon.

Jack Micheline

The most recent of these christenings honors Jack Micheline, poet and veteran of the North Beach-Caff  Trieste-bohemian scene. On Nov. 15 of last year, in response to a Board of Supervisors resolution sponsored by Supervisors Aaron Peskin and Matt Gonzalez, Pardee Place, off Grant Avenue between Filbert and Greenwich, was renamed Jack Micheline Place.

Gonzalez, who has collected and published a book of Micheline's poems, *Sixty-Seven Poems for Downtrodden Saints*, was present for the ceremony. While living the Mission District, Gonzalez developed a friendship with Micheline that extended to providing the poet a place to sleep. Though Micheline's "primary residence," for lack of a better term, was the Curtis Hotel on Valencia Street, Gonzalez says, "he was always quick to pack his bags and take a trip, then roll back into town and sleep on my couch until he could get his hotel room back."

At the ceremony, Gonzalez read a poem by Micheline that the poet, who had his irascible side, claimed he hadn't written. It was only when Gonzalez confronted him with the text in the poet's own handwriting that he conceded the poem was his. He then insisted that it be included in Gonzalez's collection.

Micheline, who died in 1998 at age 68 while riding a BART train between San Francisco and



Cafe Trieste by Jack Micheline

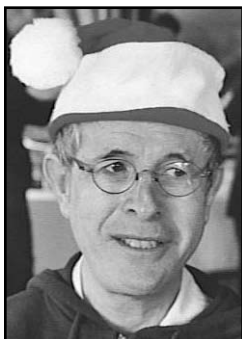
Orinda, was born in New York City. Before taking up his calling as a poet, he spent time as a union organizer, some of it in black areas of the South (where "other organizers were afraid go"). Returning to New York, he frequented, along with other poets and artists, a spot called Dr. Generosity's. The writer indigokono remembers Micheline there: "Of all the poets who came through the Doctor's doors — and the list is long

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THE QUESTION

What's the Best Thing about THD?
Asked at THD's Holiday Party



George Perazzo

George Perazzo: The views, the open space, the quiet. You're above the business of everyday life.

Tanya Oliver: There's a spirit here. People are always congratulating and supporting each other. It's rare to find that kind of warmth in a big city.

Elaine Turner: You live with the beauty of the hill and the fun of North Beach, and still you can walk to work.



Tanya Oliver

Tina Smelser: The vibrancy and variety of experience here, exercising in the park with chi gung, walking up to Coit Tower to take in views of the Gate and the Bay.

Mary Lipson: The neighborhood feel. You know your neighbors. You know the merchants. Speedy's is not just another store. It's part of our community.

Jim Volente: I like being in a small town surrounded by a big city.

Steve Hord: I've lived here many years, and now that I'm retired I can appreciate the peaceful, less stressful environment. It's a long way from my former life as a stockbroker less than a mile down the hill.



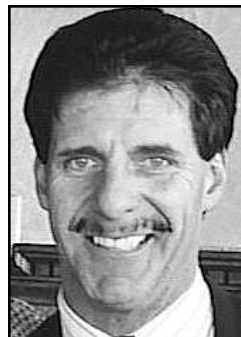
Elaine Turner



Tina Smelser



Mary Lipson



Jim Volente

ON PERSON

About Living on the Hill?

Day Event, Julius' Castle



Steve Hord

Audrey Tomaselli: The sounds of the city. The Chinese have a term for it, “warm noise”: the sound of the garage door going down, a dog yapping, the parrots squawking, a Chinese man and Italian woman each putting out their wash, speaking to each other in different languages, but communicating. Sounds like these remind you that remind you live in a vibrant community.



Marc Bruno



Audrey Tomaselli

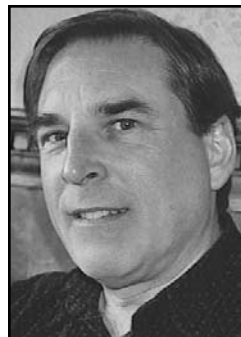
Maya Armour: The warm-hearted welcome I’ve received since my involvement in THD. When I moved here, I didn’t know anyone. Since I’ve become connected to the Hill Dwellers, the neighborhood has become much more to me than a beautiful place to live.

Marc Bruno: I can walk to get anything I need and when visitors come to town, I can also take them walking to Chinatown, the Wharf and other places they want to see.



Maya Armour

Lance Carnes: Washington Square Park when the parrots fly over.



Lance Carnes

From the Desk of Supervisor Peskin

By Aaron Peskin

The holidays have come and gone, and here at City Hall the political landscape has changed along with the new year. Now that the elections hullabaloo has died down and our mailboxes are no longer overflowing with campaign mail, I am able to update you on some important issues in city politics and around the neighborhood.



When I first ran for office, I was motivated in part by my desire to stem the insider dealing that plagued city government, particularly as it related to the contracting process. Over the past few years, we have made real progress towards cleaning up this process, by demanding accountability for contracting fraud at SFO's International Terminal and for SFO's lavish overspending on the dormant runway expansion project, and by auditing the city's Planning and Building departments.

Credit should be given to the current city attorney, Dennis Herrera, who has become much more aggressive in pursuing contractors who defraud the City. Over the last year, his office and ours have collaborated on legislation that will create standardized procedures for debarring contractors who are found to have committed malfeasance or fraud in the execution of their public contracts.

This legislation, recently passed by a unanimous vote of the Board of Supervisors, makes several significant changes to current law. It codifies a set of procedures for debarring fraudulent contractors, and places all the portions of city code relating to debarment in one section of law (They had been scattered about in various codes).

It prevents fraudulent contractors and non-profits that do business with the city from circumventing the current flimsy rules by "going out of business" and then instantly reforming under a

different name or by changing the members of their board. It establishes standard due process procedures for hearings and appeals; and creates strict timelines for processing of these cases which have often languished for years under civil servants and elected officials who didn't have the stomach or political will to deal with them.

This legislation puts all contractors that do business with the city on notice that San Francisco is finally implementing a zero tolerance policy for fraud and abuse. It will create a level playing field in the marketplace by letting prospective contractors know that their bids will be evaluated on the merits and not by political influence and interference.

With the change in mayoral administration, decisive leadership by City Attorney Herrera, and action of the Board of Supervisors, we have a real opportunity to clean up the city's public contracting practices. We are already seeing refreshing results. Recently, the Board of Supervisors rejected a proposal to redevelop the west cargo field at S.F. International out of concern that the process was fatally flawed by money and influence. This \$258 million proposal was a first for SFO, representing the first time a major capital project would have been outsourced to a private, third-party company (Airis LLC) that would realize the majority of profits generated by the development.

Based in Texas, Airis was selected over AMB, a San Francisco company, despite the fact that airport staff and a panel of judges recommended AMB. Much like the Mills proposal for Piers 27-31, in which the opposing bidder received consistently higher rankings by port staff and citizens advisory, Airis triumphed by securing the support of Mayor Brown's handpicked Airport Commission.

continued on next page

SUPERVISOR PESKIN *cont'd from page 18*

The Board of Supervisors rejection of the Airis proposal sent a clear message that the old way of doing business with the city is no longer acceptable. I am hopeful that we will be able to move forward with this project and develop a new cargo facility at SFO, while ensuring fairness for all potential bidders and the best deal for the city and its taxpayers.

For those who would accuse the board of standing in the way of progress and creating a bad business environment, I have this to say: By rejecting this deal, the board reassured businesses that consider doing business with San Francisco that we have an open, fair and honest contracting process. In the long run this will result in bringing world class, competitive firms back that have long shunned San Francisco because of its sullied reputation as a place where honest bidders can't get a fair shake without greasing the wheels.

Meanwhile, back in our neighborhood, many exciting things are taking place. The North

Beach Place project, a \$102 million project featuring public housing and low-income housing for families and senior citizens, is on schedule to be completed in November. In addition to a Trader Joe's shopping market, the development will include 341 new units, 229 of which are already reserved for public housing. Monthly rents on the additional units will range from \$500-\$1,100.

Also, the battle to save the Triangle adjacent to Joe DiMaggio Playground received a major boost in December when the Board of Supervisors voted to require the developers of the site to conduct a more comprehensive review of potential environmental impacts from the proposed condo project. A major concern that was raised by board members was the effect of any new shadowing on the playground and library.

And, as always, please be in touch with my office as you have questions or concerns with the neighborhood or the city: 554-7450 or aaron.peskin@sfgov.org. See you around the neighborhood.

**WHERE POETS MATTER** *cont'd from page 15*

and impressive — Jack was the only one who was a full-time poet. I mean that's all he did — be a poet."

It seemed a case of an artist who couldn't help himself. "I never wanted to be a poet," he informed his friend Roy Freed. "I came from a really tough section of the Bronx and poets were sissies."

And though he published 20 books, he told interviewer Eddie Woods, "I've never been a professional poet in my life. I live it. I walk the streets and I get the message and I write it down."

Micheline moved to San Francisco in the mid-1970s, and became a fixture on the bohemian scene. One of his hangouts during these years was Scott Harrison's Abandoned Planet book-

store on Valencia. Harrison was at first unimpressed. Micheline would come in and sit on the bookstore's couch all day long; neither the man's looks nor demeanor inspired Harrison's respect. "If that was a full time poet," Harrison wrote, "I'd think about sweeping streets."

That impression changed when Harrison attended a Micheline reading at the Mission Cultural Center: "Jack Micheline amazed me. He read poems about remaining a free spirit. He hollered, wailed, cooed, sang, ranted like a rusty drum. He read poems about flowers and prostitutes and a couple about his old friends 'cheated and gone.' He described sweet souls caught at the bottom in life's meat grinder. He had poems for

continued on next page

WHERE POETS MATTER *cont'd from page 15*

the lonely and locked out.”

Coming on Micheline “hawking his three-buck chap books in the rain under the marquee of the Roxie Theater on 16th Street,” as Alan Kaufman described him, one might understand why he saw himself as a troubadour of the outsiders. In his “Poem to the Freaks” Micheline writes:

To be passed over like a bad penny

*To live as I have done is surely absurd, in cheap hotels
and furnished rooms.*

*To walk the side streets and down back alleys and talk
to oneself.*

Now with the naming of Jack Micheline Place, Micheline has, in our neighborhood, a back alley of his own.

Bob Kaufman

Unlike Jack Micheline, whose North Beach

roots emerge primarily from his frequent forays into the neighborhood, Bob Kaufman “the quintessential subculture poet,” lived on Telegraph Hill and in North Beach. For a while he resided at 28 Harwood Alley in the apartment of fellow poet, Neeli Cherkovski. In 1988, Harwood Alley, off Filbert between Grant and Kearny, was renamed Bob Kaufman Street as part of poet and City Lights Bookstore owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s campaign—supported by THD—to rename streets after writers and artists with a San Francisco connection.

Kaufman shared many of Micheline’s attitudes. “I want to be anonymous,” he told an interviewer, “My ambition is to be completely forgotten.”

Kaufman did his best to facilitate this goal by reciting his work from memory and not preparing it for publication. His words were transformed

from jottings to the printed page almost by accident. Raymond Foye, who edited a collection of Kaufman’s poetry, *The Ancient Rain*, writes of finding handwritten manuscripts of Kaufman’s poems in the smoldering ruins of a burnt out San Francisco hotel from which Kaufman had just escaped. There is a story of another one of his early unpublished poems being discovered on the



Bob Kaufman reading from his first book at The Coffee Gallery, c. 1957. Imogene Cunningham is seated at far right of photo. PHOTO: C. SNYDER, COURTESY SHAPING SAN FRANCISCO

continued on next page

WHERE POETS MATTER *cont'd from page 20*

floor of a North Beach restaurant in the 1980s.

His wife, Eileen, who is the person most responsible for seeing that his work was published, tells of Kaufman proclaiming poetry to customers in diners, shouting it to passengers in cars stuck in traffic, and holding forth, extemporaneously and at length, at venues such as the Coffee Gallery (1353 Grant, now the Lost and Found Saloon).

Born in New Orleans in 1925, the 10th of 13 children of an African American and part Jewish father, and a school teacher mother from an Old New Orleans African American Catholic family, Kaufman joined the merchant marine, becoming active in the radical Seafarer's Union. Like Micheline, he worked for a while as a union organizer, mostly in the South.

Before departing for North Beach in the late 1950s, he spent time in New York where he became the intimate of jazz musicians, including Charlie Parker, after whom his only son, Parker, was named.

Arriving in San Francisco, Kaufman took up the outsider stance characteristic of North Beach bohemians of the period. As a radical street poet he often incurred the wrath of the local police for reciting his poetry aloud in public. It is said that in 1959 alone, he was arrested on disorderly conduct charges 39 times.

On one occasion, police tore from the window of another bohemian hangout, the Co-Existence Bagel Shop (1398 Grant, now North Beach Video), a Kaufman piece that told how Hitler moved to San Francisco to become a particular policeman, whom he named. This cop, Kaufman wrote, now devoted himself to stamping out beatniks.

Ever the word man, the very invention of the word "beatnik" may have been Kaufman's work. One day at 12 Adler (now Specs), Kaufman was riffing with the words "beat" (as in beat genera-

tion) and "Sputnik" and, some say, put them together to make "beatnik." Or the melding may have come from columnist Herb Caen, who was also bellied up to the bar that day. At any rate, Caen, who was the first to use the word in print, gets the OED credit line.

Kaufman, however, gets full points as a master of language. Largely self-educated, he would quote from memory Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Garcia Lorca, Hart Crane and all the poets in the beatnik pantheon. He coined the word, "abomunist," (derived from (communism, atom bomb, Bob Kaufman, abomination, and probably other words) to characterize those dadaist/anarchists like himself who viewed with suspicion all "isms."

Kaufman was a neighborhood character, but he was also a man of great sensitivity who, in 1963, in protest of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, took a vow of silence that he maintained until the end of the Vietnam War.

And though he considered himself a street poet he, despite himself, created work, that as the lines below suggest, resonate far beyond Grant Avenue, circa 1959:

*Whether I am a poet or not, I use fifty dollars'
worth
of air every day, cool.
In order to exist I hide behind stacks of red and blue
poems
And open little sensuous parasols, stinging the nail-
in
The foot-song, drinking cool beatitudes.*

When Kaufman died in 1986, a New Orleans funeral procession, complete with a rag-tag band, was held in North Beach. It was, to use Kaufman's words, a memorable day in

*San Fran, hipster land,
Jazz sounds, wig sounds
Earthquake sounds, others ...*

THD Board Motions FOR THE MONTHS OF SEPT., OCT., NOV. 2003

September None

October: MOTION: We move that THD accept the offer of a donation from an anonymous donor to help THD cover the costs it is incurring in connection with its effort to save the triangle park at 701 Lombard.

November: MOTION: THD strongly supports the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco in adopting a resolution urging the San Francisco Port Commission not to extend the Exclusive Right to Negotiate with Mills Corporation and to re-issue the Request for Proposals for the

development and Lease of Piers 27-31 as a Mixed-use Recreation Project.

MOTION: We move that a donation of \$50 be given to Tel-Hi Neighborhood Organization by THD.

MOTION: We move that THD send letters to State and City officials recommending that Cal Trans delay construction of the new overhead ramp at Market Street until the San Francisco County Transportation can complete its pending study on this issue.

MOTION: We move that THD accept Baker and McKenzie's offer of pro bono legal services on behalf of THD.



OWN A PIECE OF TELEGRAPH HILL HISTORY

The first event in THD's 50th birthday celebration will take place March 21st when a cocktail party and art auction are held at the Schein & Schein, 1528 Grant Avenue to celebrate Morton and Betty Rader.

The work of Betty, a painter, and Morton, a photographer, as well as an architect and a THD President during the 1960s, will be auctioned at the event. The week before the cocktail party, the paintings and photographs of these two artists will be exhibited at the gallery, and visitors will be invited to bid in a silent auction. This preliminary bidding will be followed by a live auction at the cocktail party. The funds raised will help THD stage other events in celebration of our 50th year.

Betty Long Rader, 1926-2001, began painting with her father when she was in her late teens. Continuing her studies in Paris, she met and married Morton Rader. Morton and Betty lived in Paris, Athens and Teheran where Betty painted the world around her with keen eyes. They traveled extensively, working their way through Asia before returning to the United States. In the late 1950s, they settled in San Francisco at 17 Alta Street on Telegraph Hill.

After Betty's death, her old friends Frants and

Judith Strong Albert visited the couple's house at Stinson Beach to pay their respects and were surprised to find some of Betty's paintings. They were unaware that she had been such an accomplished painter. When they learned that much of her work had already been taken away by an East Bay salvager, they went to work retrieving the paintings. Although many works had already been lost, they gathered a collection that represented Betty's output from 1946-1998. They mounted an exhibition in Oakland that prompted a group of former Telegraph Hill residents and friends to band together and give the artist the respect she deserves.

They formed *The Friends of Morton and Betty Long Rader* and purchased the collection outright from the Rader estate with the intention of exhibiting and publishing the work. In 2003, there were two exhibitions—one in San Francisco and one in Stinson Beach—and a monograph is in the works. The paintings that are being offered for sale at our THD art auction have been cleaned, restored, framed, exhibited, and documented for publication and lovingly preserved by *The Friends of Morton and Betty Long Rader*. Come take a peek and join us for cocktails to toast the past and carry its memory into the future.



Parks & Trees Report

by Julieanne M. Christensen

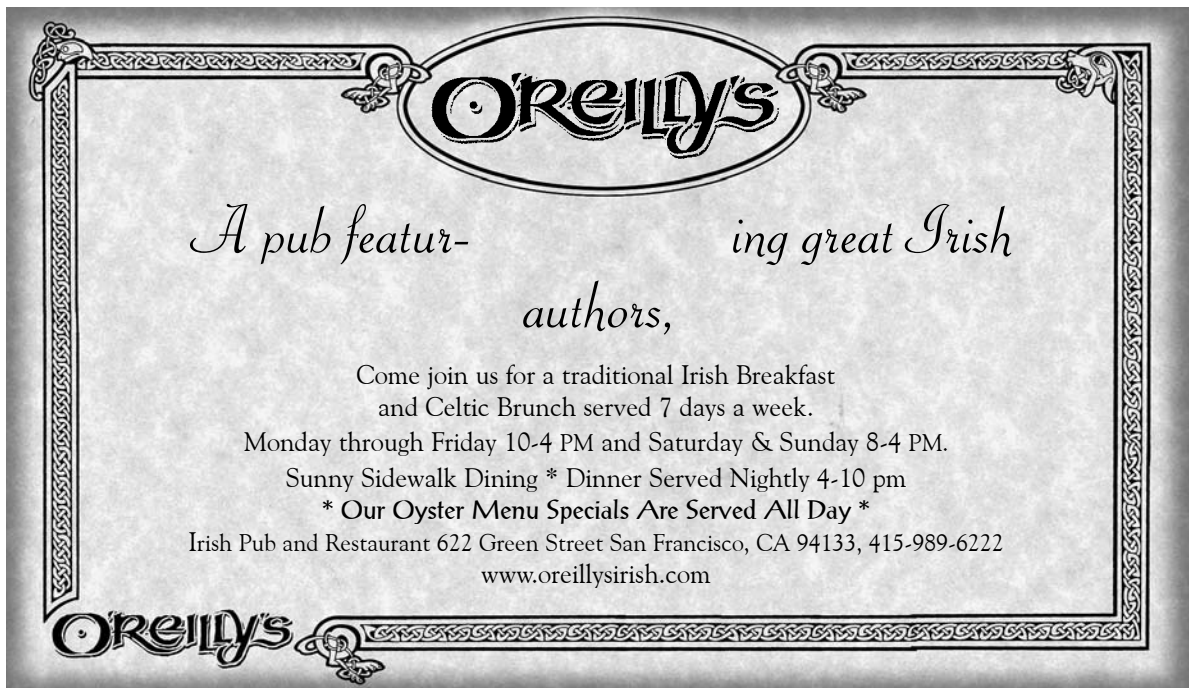
The biggest news for park-related issues in our neighborhood — indeed, for issues of virtually any category — is the installation of our new mayor. Neighbors have demonstrated repeatedly, through responses to surveys and public meetings, through financial contributions and persistent volunteerism, that parks are supremely valued and a key quality of life topic for our area. What role does a busy city mayor play in that arena?

Mayor Brown facilitated the expenditure of city funds for improvements at Pioneer Park, helping us to complete that project. He also heeded our request for a Decaux toilet there. On the other hand, he upset many neighbors by directing city staff to allow the almost surreptitious placement of the large base under the Columbus statue at Pioneer Park and the Juana

Briones “tombstone” in Washington Square. He has also generated a great deal of animosity recently by directing his appointees on the RecPark Commission to rescind their support of the Triangle acquisition.

But all that is in the past. The question now is, what will be the stance of the incoming mayor on park and open space issues? Prior to district elections, then Supervisor Newsom was actively involved in issues related to Joe DiMaggio Playground. He was present for the 150th anniversary celebration of Washington Square. And he has consistently listed quality parks as a signature goal of his proposed administration. But many neighbors have been disheartened by his curious and unexplained refusal to support acquisition of the Triangle, particularly in light of his

continued on page 24



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Parks and Trees *continued from p. 23*

acknowledgement of the importance of parks to our neighborhoods.

How far down Mayor Newsom's to-do list -- after the severe budget crisis, appointment of a new police chief and other department heads, crises in the Planning and other departments -- are District 3 park issues likely to fall? That may depend significantly on the influence of those in our neighborhood who have the new mayor's ear. Supervisor Peskin has done a truly exceptional job of helping to promote and improve parks, in our district and citywide. His ability to continue to do so will depend partly on Mayor Newsom's support. All of you who communicate with the incoming mayor, from close friends to casual constituents, please include the importance of our park facilities, programs and staff in your entreaties.

No report on the North Beach Pool or Helen Wills Playground is really needed for any who have passed by these sites. The autumn start to

construction and the intensity of the December rains have challenged contractors at both sites. But progress is being made.

Joe Butler continues to lead once a month work parties at Pioneer Park, for those in the mood for a bit of gardening and camaraderie.

The heated Triangle debates continue. In mid-December, a final vote on the use of eminent domain to acquire the site was again delayed. But, in a separate item, a majority of supervisors voted to reject the Planning Department's determination that the proposed 701 Lombard condo project would have no significant environmental impact. The department's "negative declaration" had not considered the alternative use of the site as a park. And, while the report acknowledged the loss of views caused by the proposed 56-foot tall condos, it did not attribute any particular significance to the location. Neighbors argued that the site, located at the junction of the axes

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SHEILA TOBIN BLACK, Ph.D.

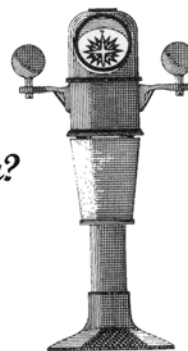
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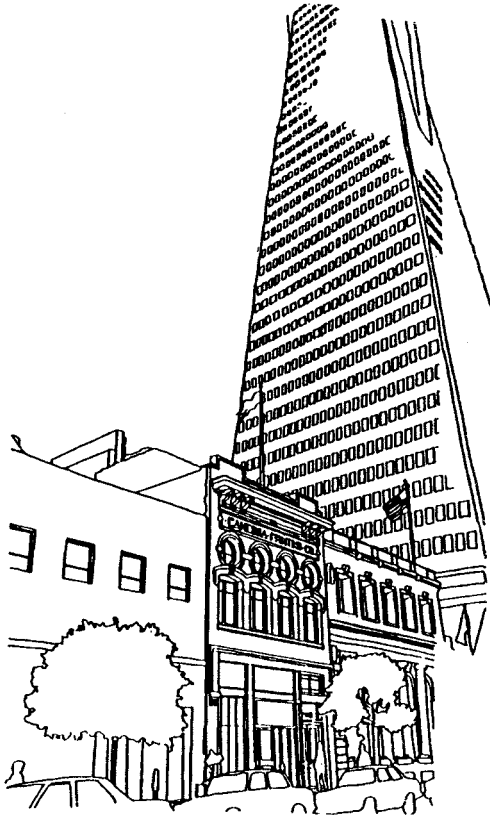
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Parks & Trees *continued from previous page*

connecting the “crookedest street in the world” to Coit Tower, and Fisherman’s Wharf to Chinatown, warranted special consideration. In



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the end, the supervisors agreed and instructed the Planning Department to redraft their report with the additional consideration of these site-related aspects.

Whatever the results of the most recent legal wrangling, a few facts remain constant: North Beach desperately needs an expanded and updated branch library, and Joe DiMaggio Playground is in dire need of renovation and improvement. No simple or inexpensive solutions exist to these needs. But few issues will affect the near and distant futures of our neighborhood and its inhabitants more significantly.

With luck, 2004 will see us cutting ribbons and enjoying wonderful new facilities at Helen Wills and the North Beach Pool and Clubhouse. Here’s hoping it will also see us planning and making joyous progress on the library and Joe DiMaggio Playground renovations instead of the miserable wrangling that closed out 2003. But important things are worth fighting for. Thanks to all who have contributed their efforts, funds and ideas to the longer vision in the past year.



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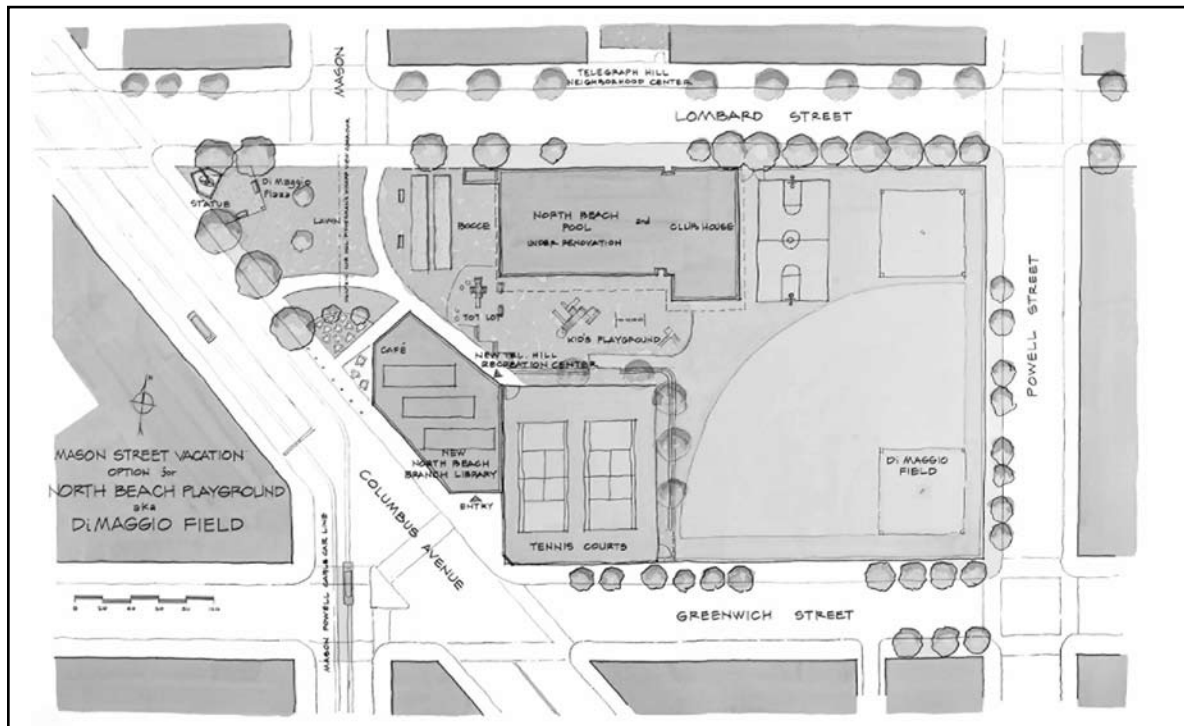


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Another View of the Triangle



Here is a community generated option for the triangle that envisions the closing of Mason Street to vehicles and affords other possibilities for the use of this space:

- The expansion of the North Beach Library in a new bond-funded building with an entrance at the corner of Greenwich and Columbus
- tennis courts, children's playground and tot lot relocated to the heart of the park
- New lawn area and a new DiMaggio Plaza at the corner of Lombard and Columbus, featuring a statue of Joe DiMaggio
- An indoor recreation space under the library, accessible from the relocated playgrounds



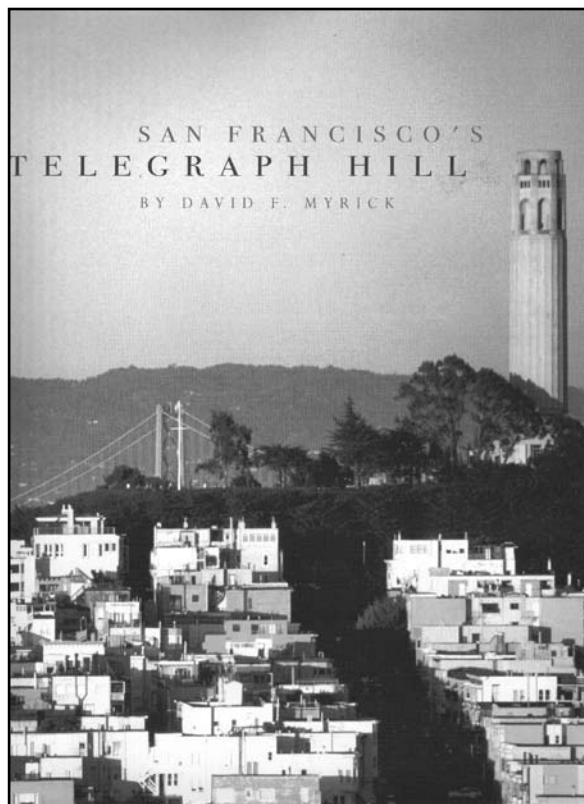
THD Board Member Joe Butler takes time out from cookie consumption to make a point with Jayson Wechter at THD new members cocktail party.

Order your copy of San Francisco's Telegraph Hill

As almost everyone who has lived on Telegraph Hill for long knows, *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* by David Myrick is a collector's item. The out-of-print first edition of this book, lovingly detailing the colorful history of the Hill, sells for \$200 these days.

In 2002, David agreed to make revisions to the original, and THD agreed to sponsor the second edition of the Myrick book. The new volume includes 32 new pages and 50 more photographs.

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Jeffrey Pollack: THD's Yuletide Host



Twenty-two years ago, Jeffrey Pollack and his family took over ownership of Julius' Castle Restaurant at the end of Montgomery Street. And for 20 of those years, Pollack has been hosting THD's annual holiday event, either at the Castle or down the street at the now-closed De La Torre.

"It's my way of saying thanks," Pollack says. "I may not agree with every position of the Hill Dwellers, but they have been good neighbors."

Each year, Pollack springs for the dinners of 100 or more Hill Dwellers and their guests. In turn, according to social chair Maxine Schulman, THD "gives him a considerable tip for his staff, plus some very good wine for himself. The remainder goes into the treasury for social events. It's the only event that makes money for us."

We took advantage of our chat with Pollack to ask about a persistent rumor: Is Julius Castle for sale? He says no. The family trust, (not Pollack) has De La Torre on the market, but Pollack says he isn't selling the Castle. "Any building I've ever sold has had a 'for sale' sign out in front," he said. "You don't see a for sale sign here."



(Left to Right) Gerry Crowley, Col. Stanley Diamon, Marshall Schulman and Tom Noyes indulge the holiday spirit at annual Julius Castle event.

THD Welcomes New Members

August 2003 to October 2003

Ruth Linden & Alexandra Alznauer, Bruce Nigh & Luanne Calvert, Kathleen & Scott Coady, Michael Cohen, John D. Golenski, Francesca Passalacqua & Donald Hardy, Heidi & Peter Knez, Marcy Liston, Marni Kate McKirahan, Diane Feeney & Will Muecke, Kevin Kaull & Vedica Puri, Susan Lee & Gordon Reetz, Lisa Gumina-Rivera & Anthony Rivera, Justo Robles, Rogue Ales Public Amy West & Terry Schackmann, Carolyn & Chip Seefer, Mr. & Mrs. Joe Sullivan, Wilbert Wong, Ann Yuey.

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THD CALENDAR

2nd Saturday Stair & Garden Work Parties, March 13, April 10, May 8. Meet at Pioneer Park. For more information call 552-7774..

MARCH

21—Celebration of the Rader
Paintings
21—General Membership
Cocktail Party

MAY

Movie at Washington Square
Members will receive dates of
these events in invitations 3 to
4 weeks prior to the occasion.
This summer will feature cele-
brations of THDs 50th
Anniversary.

APRIL

General Membership Meet-ing
and Election of the Board

Dates and locations subject to change.

Schedules of Committee Meetings

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